

Reaping the Benefit of Seed Planting

Challenge

Access to improved seed varieties that are drought tolerant and can produce greater yields is key to successful farming. Yet many Kenyan farmers live in remote areas where these seeds are not available and it is difficult to buy modern tools and fertilizer. Even when these seeds and tools are available, many farmers do not know how to use them or have access to the cash or credit to purchase them.



USAID/Kenya

Initiative

USAID is working with local farmers, as well as private seed producers and farm product distributors, to meet these challenges. With technical assistance, some 245 small-scale seed growers are proving that they can produce seed varieties that meet inspection and certification standards set by the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate

Services. This USAID project has trained more than 10,000 rural farmers, nearly half of whom are women, to increase their harvests and strengthen their marketing and business skills by using improved seeds and fertilizers. The project has also worked with partners, distributors, and community organizations to improve collaboration, trade, and marketing of agricultural tools and farm products.

Results

Local certified seed production is giving farmers access to improved varieties closer to home and reducing marketing and transportation costs, with 150 individual seed distributors currently passing on these savings to farmers through reduced prices. Currently, 2,000 participating farmers are planting improved varieties and using new farm practices to demonstrate firsthand the benefits to other farmers. These efforts are creating greater awareness among farmers and increasing market demand for certified seeds.

Despite their greater cost, these improved varieties yield 50 to 80 percent greater harvests compared to traditional seeds. Income from the sale of certified seed varieties increased from \$2,036 in 2001 to \$14,077 in 2002. These gains show that the farmers are putting their new knowledge to work and improving their households' security in the process. Farmers report that greater incomes have enabled them to purchase additional livestock, improve their houses, and pay school fees for their children.

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